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The Loneliest Man In Washington

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JOHN FOSTER DULLES's first ninety days in office had barely ended when this most communicative of Secretaries of State reported to the nation on the extent to which he had changed if not reversed signals at the State Department. With satisfaction he announced that a new broom had swept out holdovers from the past. There were already installed "... two new Under Secretaries ... six new Assistant Secretaries ... a new Legal Adviser, a new Counselor, a new Director of the International Information Administration ... The whole Policy Planning Staff is to go under new direction ... We are also bringing fresh vision and new vigor into our United Nations mission and into our Embassies abroad. ... New ambassadors are installed ... in ... [there followed a long list of places]."

Concerning the personnel of the Foreign Service that had come under his direction, Dulles had certain reservations, which he expressed publicly in a kind of reverse English: "There is a tendency in some quarters to feel that confidence cannot be placed in these career officials because in the past ... they served under Democrat [sic] Presidents and Democrat Secretaries of State." Still, "It is, however, easier than most think" (observe how the "some" has been upgraded to "most"), for these officials to adapt themselves to the new leadership. For they were, "with rare exceptions," a splendid and patriotic group.

This equivocal praise from the chief was flashed to Foreign Service men around the world. He had already admonished them not only to "loyalty" but to "positive loyalty"—presumably as against something henceforth to be considered mere negative loyalty.

Dulles came into office with a deep desire to disassociate himself from the past, to wipe the slate clean and start afresh according to his own lights. Having declared that the Truman era's policies had "put our nation in the greatest peril it has ever been in the course of its national history ...," he evidently looked upon the change of Administration as the mandate for an entire change



of régime. He mistrusted the particular legacy he had come into, and the Secretary had reasons for not standing in awe of professionals in any case. Dulles was no newcomer: He had moved amid international affairs as long as any of them—in fact, ever since the time he had served at the 1907 Peace Conference at The Hague—and mostly he had moved at the top.

There was another basic element in the incoming Secretary's conditioning. Over the decades—first looking back at the time when his grandfather, John W. Foster, had been

Secretary of State, then on the years when his uncle, Robert Lansing, had held the office, and finally on the period when it was filled by Dean Acheson, the man he had served in the heyday of bipartisanship as a Republican consultant—Dulles had observed one constant fact. In a nation many of whose people were traditionally inclined to look on foreign affairs as nothing more than foreigners' affairs, the State Department in general and its chief in particular had never been popular at home. Dulles, his friends agree, had wanted ardently since early manhood to be Secretary of State in the family tradition; but what he had kept to himself was that he didn't want to be one like his Uncle Robert, who had had almost as much trouble with the Republicans on the Hill in his day as Acheson had in his. What good was it to put over your policies abroad unless you could also sell yourself at home?

The Search for a Constituency

"The trouble with the State Department," one of Dulles's chief assistants quotes him as saying, "is that it has no constituency like Agriculture or Commerce or Labor." Now a constituency means a body of organized support capable of exerting pressure. In Washington's top bureaucracy, a basic rule holds that one's constituency begins in one's own office. Next one seeks to cultivate the press. Then the road—often strewn with traps—leads upward to the Hill and outward toward the voters.

Secretary Dulles, a world-minded lawyer of phenomenal skill, nimbleness of intellect, indestructible stamina, and a confidence in himself fully justified by his attainments, entered upon his duties quite certain that he